

Couples HIV Counseling and Testing

Module Seven: Support and Prevention Services

Module Seven examines support services that can be offered to couples affected by HIV and the steps counselors can take to link clients to these services. Services include care and treatment, psychosocial support, and community resources. In addition to identifying these services and linking couples to them, Module Seven also discusses how to mobilize a community so that more people are aware of and involved in services, support, and prevention.

Notes:

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Support Services and Resources for Couples

Couples have a great need for ongoing services after CHCT, particularly concordant positive and discordant couples. The following list of services could—ideally—be offered by HIV counseling and testing sites and by the greater community. The list is by no means complete. As work in HIV prevention continues, the need for additional services will continue to grow. Every community is different, and each will have different needs and resources.

Care and Treatment:

- Medical care
- Substance abuse treatment programs
- Case management and peer support from AIDS services organizations

Psychosocial Support:

- Ongoing counseling for couples, individuals, groups, and families
- HIV counseling and testing for children
- Prevention with Positives
- Post-test clubs and support groups
 - Peer support system
 - Individual and group counseling
 - Education to reinforce behavior change plans
 - Income-Generating Activities (IGAs)
 - Commodity distribution
- Care for orphans, HIV-affected, and other vulnerable children
- Spiritual support from faith-based organizations

Community Resources:

- Commodity distribution
 - Food
 - Nutritional supplements
- Crisis intervention and emergency services
 - Services for interpersonal violence and rape
 - Abandonment support services
 - Suicidal behavior crisis centers
 - Social activities, recreation, and drama groups
- Legal assistance programs
 - Will writing
 - Property rights
 - Succession planning
 - Inheritance
 - Workplace rights

Prevention with Positives

Most HIV prevention strategies target preventing uninfected individuals from becoming infected with HIV. However, because there is one HIV-positive person involved in every case of HIV transmission, Prevention with Positives is a very efficient and effective intervention. Prevention with Positives is designed both to prevent HIV transmission to others and also to protect the health of infected individuals by providing them with information, skills, and support.

Perhaps the most efficient model for implementing Prevention with Positives is to bring prevention and support services into HIV treatment and care settings. Strategies for doing so include:

- Having providers deliver HIV prevention messages when HIV-positive individuals visit clinics or other treatment facilities.
- Facilitating the disclosure of HIV status to sex partners.
- Developing sensitive and culturally appropriate health promotion materials that support disclosure of HIV status and safer sexual behavior among people living with HIV/AIDS.
- Facilitating partner referral for counseling and testing services.
- Providing enhanced, ongoing HIV counseling sessions for HIV-positive individuals and couples.
- Providing small group counseling sessions to enhance and reinforce risk reduction.

Care and Support Services for HIV-Affected Children

Children with one or both parents infected with HIV have ongoing health care, psychosocial, and support needs. Research has shown that early outreach to HIV-affected children and their families can help them cope more with HIV and plan for the future more effectively. (*Source: Nyonyintono 2003*)

“Succession planning” is one approach used successfully by USAID-funded programs in Uganda to intervene with HIV-affected families. Succession planning:

- Focuses on the unique needs of HIV-positive parents, their children, and standby guardians.
- Provides counseling for parents as they prepare to disclose their HIV status to their children.
- Assists parents in creating “memory books”.
- Assists parents in appointing standby guardians in the event that they become ill or die.
- Provides training for standby guardians.
- Helps parents to write a will.
- Provides children with school fees and supplies.

HIV counseling and testing programs should explore the options and programs that exist in their community. It’s important to make appropriate referrals to help HIV-positive parents with their children’s ongoing care and support needs.

Fundamentals of Referrals and Linkages

Referring couples to appropriate care and treatment services and other support is very important. There are several important steps in creating a referral network for your CHCT site.

- Start by identifying gaps in services both at your site and in the referral network.
- Identify the range of services available.
- Create an integrated referral network.
 - Assess what resources are available
 - Meet with staff at possible referral sites
 - Coordinate among service providers
 - Analyze how accessible and acceptable resources and services are to clients
- Create procedures for processing referrals. Procedures include:
 - When and how to make a referral
 - How to follow up on a referral
 - How to problem-solve obstacles such as transportation, confidentiality, and child care
- Create and regularly maintain a resource directory, including:
 - Name of the referral
 - Location and directions to the organization
 - Hours of operation
 - Eligibility criteria

Community Mobilization Basics

Couples who have undergone CHCT may need help accessing numerous support services. Counseling and testing sites should build partnerships within their communities to gain visibility and acceptance for their services and to advocate for sociocultural changes. Counseling and testing sites should also build partnerships within their communities to ensure that their activities complement existing services.

As ambassadors for CHCT in your communities, you must seek to establish continuity of care and support. You must help mobilize communities that do not yet have access to a range of services.

Community mobilization causes people to get involved and invested in issues in their communities. Community mobilization is a strategy that injects energy into a community and raises awareness.

Some basic steps to mobilizing a community include:

- Meeting with local leaders and community policy-makers.
- Meeting with various groups in the community, such as churches and community centers.
- Convening interested and invested parties for discussions.
- Initiating sensitization and awareness campaigns.
- Establishing advocacy groups.
- Generating media attention through newspapers, billboards, radio, and other outlets.
- Being aware of the role of public and private sectors. For example, donor organizations, existing partnerships, community-based organizations, and faith-based organizations all have the potential for collaboration or the potential to give funding to your organization.

References

Nyonyintono R, Gilborn L. Succession Planning in Uganda: Early Outreach for AIDS-Affected Children and Their Families. Horizons Final Report. Washington, DC: Population Council, 2003.